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08/03/2018

Haines Borough Assembly  
Box 1209  
Haines, AK 99827

RE: Taxing the Problem: passing and funding the solid waste ordinance

Dear Assembly Members:

I hope that the Haines Borough Assembly will pass a solid waste ordinance so that our community can, at long last, enter the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The draft that the manager has developed is sufficient and in no way excessive or over-reaching. Some will tell you that by assuming these essential municipal powers, or by establishing rate “incentives” for waste reduction, reuse and recycling--or that by using new sales tax funds for this purpose--that the sky is falling. They are mistaken. However, I do recommend a different way to fund waste management, besides the 1% sales tax increase.

Our wondrous planet is now awash in non-degradable plastic trash. So, in the context of consumer behavior, resource use and life on earth, the metaphor of the sky “falling” is correct. The draft ordinance appropriately allows the borough to levy fees on specific classifications of trash, which I hope you’ll do upfront.

By my calculation, Haines uses through over 2,000,000 single service beverage containers annually: Alu. cans, #1PET bottles, beer bottles and single use beverage cups. It’s been a few years since I made that calculation, but it’s based on average data about average US consumer behavior. A point-of-retail tax of \$0.1 on each single-serve container would generate about \$200,000 yearly. This levy isn’t about returnable bottles (like Oregon’s bottle bill), rather, it’s just a straight up tax on one particularly nefarious, modern component of the problem. Generating revenue from the problem directly *sends a powerful, needed message to consumers*. Haines would be joining rank with Seattle, WA, Berkley, CA and Baltimore, MD, city’s that also tax certain single use beverages.

The vast majority of “recyclable” containers are trashed. In the past 40 years the exponential growth of one-and-done, plastic packaging has become a plague to the seas: awash in plastic trash large and microscopic. As a marine community, with over ½ of our economy based on healthy oceans and landscapes (tourism and fishing), a fee to address SOME of this non-conservative, polluting behavior is hard to argue against--*unlike increasing the sales tax*.

I personally would go to the polls and vote for the sales tax increase to cover waste management and recycling, but most won’t. A proposal to increase sales taxation will lose at the polls, particularly without a strong, vocal constituency for change and I don’t see that coming from any local group. It’s really very sad!

The ordinance language is a no-brainer; the funding mechanism is the issue. BE CREATIVE. People get it! A waste-tax on single serve beverage retail will be easy to implement in the age of computers and can win. If sales tax is proposed for funding the waste ordinance, the assembly would gain votes by: a) making the tax seasonal (May through September) or b) reallocating SOME of the current tax for tourism and economic development to waste management and recycling.

Sincerely, Burl Sheldon